

Young Faculty Award 2015

DARPA-RA-15-32 Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) I noticed that the Research Announcement number has changed. Which of the Announcements should I submit my proposal to?**

DARPA-RA-15-32 is an updated Research Announcement. There were some minor edits to the technical section (topic areas) from the previous announcement, but the contracting language and application instructions remain the same. You should submit your proposal to DARPA-RA-15-32.

- 2) Does the 2015 YFA Research Announcement allow co-PIs or subcontractors?**

No.

- 3) The BAA specifies single-investigator proposal only, and precludes subcontracting. Am I allowed to include another faculty member at my university, if they are included in a supporting role, and not listed as a Co-PI?**

Yes.

- 4) I am a young investigator at a research institute which is a small not-for-profit group. As a not-for-profit business, we do not have tenure-track positions. Do I qualify as part of an equivalent non-profit research institution?**

If the proposer is from a non-profit science and technology research institution a determination of eligibility must be made using the following guidance:

- The PI is within 5 years of the appointment hire date.
- The employing organization does not offer tenure track appointments.
- The appointment is a continuing appointment (soft-money appointments and/or visiting appointments do not apply and will not be considered).

5) Is a Ph.D. required?

No.

6) I am considering applying to other Young Investigator programs sponsored by other agencies. Does that disqualify me from proposing to (or being selected for) the DARPA YFA grant?

No.

7) I would like to request a meeting with a specific YFA topic POC. Is this possible?

No. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of responses to this RA, YFA topic POCs are unable to accommodate such meetings. However, if you have a specific question you may send it to DARPA-RA-15-32@darpa.mil.

8) Under what topic is my research most applicable?

It is up to you to choose the most appropriate topic area for your proposed research. As stated in the RA, please note that "DARPA reserves the right to assign proposals to a different topic area than what was proposed."

9) My idea fits into multiple topic areas and/or subtopic areas. May I submit to all topics and/or subtopics that are applicable?

No. You may submit to ONE and only one topic area and ONE subtopic area if applicable. It is up to you as the proposer to choose a topic area and/or subtopic area from the twenty three technical topic areas listed in DARPA-RA-15-32 that most closely aligns with your proposed idea.

10) I am [a non-U.S. citizen/a Permanent Resident/here on a Green Card/etc.]; can I apply to YFA? Do I need to be able to obtain a security clearance to be eligible for YFA?

There is no language in the RA prohibiting a non-U.S. citizen/Permanent Resident/person here on a Green Card/etc. from applying to this RA; all such persons MAY apply to this RA. It is NOT a requirement of the RA that proposers be eligible to obtain a U.S. security clearance.

11) I started my assistant professor position in the Spring of 2010. How is the 5-year time window calculated?

The 5-year time window is calculated from your date of hire for your current tenure-track appointment to assistant or associate professor, to the date that proposals are due (April 13, 2015). If you were appointed to a tenure-track position before April 13, 2010, you are not eligible to apply.

12) If I was previously in a tenured position, but have changed universities and am currently in an untenured (but tenure-track) position, am I still eligible to submit a proposal?

Yes, as long as you are still within the 5-year date of hire window.

13) If I am an Assistant Professor not in a tenure-track position (even though my institution offers tenure-track positions) am I eligible to submit a proposal?

No.

14) Are both the Executive summary slide and biosketch included in the 8-page limit as stated in the proposal format instructions?

Yes.

15) Will the YFA solicitation go out every year, and will the topic areas vary over the years?

We are unable to make good-faith predictions about future solicitations. While this program has received positive feedback in the past, the future of the program depends on the availability of funding. The topic areas for YFA solicitations tend to vary, but are designed to meet the needs of DARPA Program Managers at the time that the solicitation is issued. Some new topics could be added while others change only slightly.

16) Can I view a sample abstract of a previously-awarded proposal?

No. DARPA does not collect abstracts for proposals submitted to YFA solicitations.

17) I am interested in collaborating with other faculty members. How should I structure my collaboration in the proposal?

The Research Announcement prohibits subcontracting or co-principal investigators. It is up to the applicant to structure his or her research team in a way that best supports the research goals. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their YFA submission with their Office of Sponsored Research (or equivalent) several weeks in advance of the submission deadline.

18) The RA specifies "Applicants are also limited to ONE submission to this RA." Does the applicant refer to the university or the principal investigator?

"Applicants" refers to the individual faculty member and not the institution. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted by an institution, as long as each application lists a single principal investigator. Investigators may only propose to one topic area each.

19) I am an untenured Assistant professor. However, my promotion and tenure package is currently being revised. If granted, I will be granted tenure sometime during the summer of 2015. Am I eligible for this DARPA YFA?

As long as you are untenured (but within 5 years of having been appointed to a tenure track position) on the proposal due date of April 13, 2015, then you are eligible to propose.

20) Should we include a budget for equipment, and is there a funding limitation on equipment purchases?

If you will need to purchase equipment to perform your research, then it should be included in your budget via a priced Bill-of-Materials (see pages 26-27 of the research announcement). There is no specific limit for equipment purchases; however, your total budget for the 24-month base period cannot exceed \$500,000.

21) If I have previously been awarded (non-YFA) DARPA funding, am I eligible to propose to this research announcement?

Yes.

22) Should proposers include a budget for the Director's Fellowship in the third year?

Yes. As noted in Section III (page 27), the Cost Proposal should include a "summary of total program costs by phase (Phase I, Phase II, Director's Fellowship Option) and calendar fiscal year." Note that there is a maximum budget of \$500,000 for the Director's Fellowship (page 28).

23) If I took a leave of absence (i.e. maternity, sabbatical, etc.) within 5 years of being hired to a tenure-track position, should this period be included in the 5 year window?

Situations like this are highly case-dependent. Each university or research institution maintains a tenure-track appointment date for each employee, and this is the date that should be listed in a proposal. If the university is willing to take a leave of absence into account and subsequently changes the date of appointment, then that date may be listed on the proposal. DARPA will only accept the official date according to the university.

24) Are preliminary results required, allowed but not required, or not allowed in this solicitation?

Preliminary results are allowed but not required.

25) Are Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) eligible for grant funding under this RA?

No.

26) Are active duty military members (post PhD) teaching at US Service Academies eligible to propose?

See answer to Question 4.

27) The research announcement specifies that the tables included in the cost proposal should be provided in MS Excel format with formula calculations intact to allow traceability of the cost proposal numbers. It is our experience with grants.gov

submissions that data is flattened during the submission process. How should we submit these files?

Please submit the files in the format specified according to the Research Announcement guidelines. As there is no page limit for the cost proposal, you are welcome to display a breakdown of numbers in a format that provides the greatest clarity. If selected for award, the contracting officer will be able to request the working MS Excel file(s) from you directly.

28) Is there a specific format for the cost proposal, or should we use our own template? Should we include both Excel and PDF files?

There is no specific format, and you are welcome to use your own template. You may upload both MS Excel and PDF files. Note that if there is any difference in the files, the PDF will take precedence.

29) Does the 8 page limit only apply to B. Technical Proposal and Statement of Work in Section II of Volume I? Is additional information (references and funding list) counted toward the page limit

The 8 page limit applies to Volume I, Section II, which includes: (A) the executive summary slide, (B) the technical proposal and statement of work (SOW), and (C) the biosketch. Volume I, Section III provides a space for additional information. If you include a bibliography, relevant papers (up to three), or funding lists in your submission, these should be submitted in Section III, and are not counted against the 8 page limit.

There are no page limits to the cost proposal (Volume II).

30) The RA for DARPA YFA says: "Proposals responding to this RA should clearly describe the DoD problem being addressed." Are there any recommended resources to learn about specific DoD problems?

DARPA seeks to understand and solve a wide variety of DoD problems. Current research efforts can be found on the DARPA website, located here:

http://www.darpa.mil/our_work/. Several of the technology offices also have “focus” or “thrust” areas. These should not be treated as comprehensive lists, and DARPA leaves it up to the proposer to suggest potential applications for his or her research.

31) I am unsure whether my proposed research is responsive to a particular topic area. Can you take a look at my concept paper and provide feedback?

Unfortunately, due to the high volume of requests for this solicitation, DARPA is unable to provide feedback on concept papers, white papers, abstracts, quad charts, proposal summaries, and curricula vitae. It is up to the proposer to choose a topic area that correlates with his or her research. If you think there is a correlation and are interested in proposing, then we encourage you to do so.

32) Is there a place in the submission package to include Letters of Support and Collaboration?

These can be included in Volume I, Section I of the proposal, if you choose to submit them. For collaborators receiving a salary, this should be included in the budget.

33) Is a Letter of Support from the University Department Head required for the submission?

No. However, a transmittal letter will need to come from your institution. Please reach out to your University's Office of Sponsored Research for further information and guidance.

34) What is a transmittal letter?

A transmittal letter is a standard official letter that will need to come from your institution. Please reach out to your University's Office of Sponsored Research for further information and guidance.

35) What is the effort requirement for the PI? We plan on having other FTEs working on this project so we want to budget appropriately for the PI.

DARPA cannot determine this for you. The PI's level of effort should be substantial enough to ensure that the proposed research can be completed during the grant period.

36) My proposed idea is [insert research idea]. Is this of interest? Can I get confirmation that my research fits within the scope of one of the twenty three technical areas listed in DARPA-RA-15-32?

The topic areas are purposefully broad to allow proposers to have maximum creativity in their responses. No further guidance will be provided outside of the technical information listed in the RA.

37) I want to propose to a topic area but my research will require me to use fabrication services that are not readily available at my university. If we are not allowed to use subcontractors, how should I structure my proposal?

Given the current ground rules of the RA, and the nature of the YFA program, it is reasonable to assume that fabrication services would be priced as commercial vendor services and not as research subcontractors (or team members).

38) Is the proposal funding limit \$250,000 per phase or \$500,000 total for Phase I and II together? In other words, may I have a budget exceeding \$250,000 in Phase I if the total Phase I+II budget is still under \$500,000?

As stated on page 3 of the RA, "each grant will encompass funding for a 24-month base period consisting of two 12-month phases (a maximum of \$250,000 per 12-month phase) and a 12-month option period (a maximum of \$500,000)." The maximum budget for each of your first two 12-month phases is \$250,000.

39) Does each phase limit of \$250,000 include indirect costs?

Yes

40) What kind of information should we include in the biosketch (Volume I, Section II-c)? Is there are preferred format?

The biosketch can include the same type of information that would appear on a CV or résumé, such as your current faculty position or title, educational background, awards received, publications and patents. DARPA leaves it up to the proposer to include the information that is most relevant to the proposal. You may use your own format for the biosketch.

41) Regarding the Executive Summary slide (Volume I, Section II.A), should this be included in addition to an executive summary in Section II?

No. The Executive Summary slide should be a stand-alone document that summarizes your research using the questions provided as prompts. You should follow the format established in the attachment. You do not need to include an additional executive summary in Volume I, Section II.

42) Regarding the Heilmeier Catechism questions in Volume I, Section II-B, Does DARPA want each of these questions explicitly written out and then answered (which could make the proposal straightforward to read), or is it preferable to address each of the questions in a standard proposal narrative outline?

The Heilmeier Catechism questions are guidelines to help structure your proposal. DARPA cannot provide guidance on how these questions should be answered.